

May 2011 Overview

Yosemite Backcountry Trail Crew

Supervisor: Mark Allee

I can hardly believe that a month has gone by. Can it be true that May is over already? At times it seems as though a lifetime has passed and at others surely only an eye blink. Nonetheless, May has brought us our fair share of weather. Twice we've woken up to 4-6" of snow. Tents and tarps have collapsed but spirits remain high. We've had hot sunny days, rain aplenty and bitter frost. The subtle and not so subtle variations in the natural world have become essential parts of our lives. Moods hang in the balance. Resident families of deer visits us frequently and have made sleep impossible on some nights. Some vicious squirrel or rat keeps stealing our soap. Owls lull us to sleep at night and woodpeckers hail the start of the day. Foresta has become our home. Crane Creek provides us with both a Laundromat and a bath, while Devil's Dance floor graces us with an enigmatic view. We've watched the river rise and flow. We've watched spring flowers bloom. We saw our first bear. We've watched one another change as well: dirtier, tougher, hairier but cleaner of spirit. Our group is smaller now, we are 12, and we begin the process of getting to know one another on a deeper level.

On the grade we cut our teeth on the Big Oak Flat Trail working from snowy Tamarack Creek on down. Here our sponsors taught us what a swale is, where the water flows, and the 1st standard for trail maintenance. We made short work of the Mirror Lake Loop and moved on to the dreaded Tenaya Zig Zags (aka Snow Creek Switchbacks) which we toiled up and down in the snow no less. We learned the capricious trail standards of the valley floor loop as we worked horse trails, bike paths, and storm damaged trail. We manicured the handicap accessible lower Yosemite Falls trails and immediately saw the fruits of our labor. We had special Ops teams work on explosive boulder removal, log rolling, and spur trails aplenty. We shoveled snow at Glacier Point and opened the John Muir Trail to stock traffic cruising through the Porcupine switchbacks all the way to Nevada Falls. We worked the gorgeous Upper Yosemite Falls Trail and were repaid with gratitude from the hikers and tourists who passed us by. The work is hard but the views are unparalleled. Our humble Yosemite crew has progressed from working in pairs to working individual sections of trail and some have graduated on to self-checking trail experts. Congratulations! All in all 26 maintenance miles for May. Not bad Yosemite! At times we have been in the Mickey Mouse costume at Disneyland with visitors from all over the world lining up to ask questions and have their pictures taken with a real corpsmember. At others, we've basked in the peace and quiet of an empty snow covered patch of trail on a cold spring morning. As always, the program is perfect and we are right where we are supposed to be. The time honored seasonal transformation has begun.

Curriculum:

May has been a month of learning, a crazy constant information download in order to get our whole crew up to speed in all aspects of wilderness life. You can practically hear the neurons growing and re-arranging. Our excellent sponsors, Foreman Jeremy Brown (Yosemite 1998), Anna Asp (Yosemite 2006, and Felipe Sanchez (Yosemite 2006) have instructed us all in the Yosemite way. Some highlights have been trailwork of course, chainsaw safety and use, hand tools and re-handling, radio communications, wood splitting, preventing and treating hypothermia and heat-illness, and total back health. WOW! Thank you to our awesome sponsors!

Evelyn Garretson (Yosemite 2009) our magical, top-notch chef is a joy to be around and continues to amaze and satisfy us with her delicious meals. She has personally taught each and every corpsmember how to work safely and prep cook for 16 people in an outdoor, industrial kitchen during everyone's infamous KP days (Kitchen Party!). Thanks Evelyn!

Tessa enlivened our camp with a visit and taught us about Foresta history. Thanks Tessa!

Andrea Canapary delivered an amazing 3 days of dynamic teaching and timely curriculum on the history of Yosemite, Native peoples, botany, Sierra Nevada flora and fauna, and land use controversy. We all got to role-play, act, draw, write, teach, and play. We miss her already. Thanks Andrea!

The legendary John Dill from Yosemite Search and rescue gave us a pertinent presentation on SAR operations, swift water safety, gory accidents, how to stay found, be safe, and avoid hazards here in Yosemite. Thanks John, we can't wait to help respond for a SAR if needed.

Wilderness ranger Jay Summer gave an epic daylong presentation to the crew on the Wilderness Act, Wilderness Ethics, Management, and Issues, Leave No Trace, and Map and Compass Orienteering. Thanks Ranger Jay!

Mark facilitated community discussion and classes on curriculum, CCC and Backcountry Policy, our sobriety pledge, literature, and group vs. individual needs.

Karlson paid us a lively visit for boot Christmas and there were smiles all around. Thanks Karl!

Weekend trips have taken us to Hite Cove, Lake Eleanor, Hetch Hetchy, and Rancheria Falls. No matter where we go the Bear Box Band is in full effect.

Thanks to the slew of Yosemite Alumni who have popped in to bring well wishes and snacks!

Best news of all: We move out into the backcountry mid June at City Camp to follow the snow.

Tune in next month for more exciting news and crew shenanigans.

Thanks again.